

Chapter 2: Planning Process

2 Documenting the Planning Process

Documentation of the planning process, including public involvement, is required to meet FEMA's DMA 2000 (44CFR§201.4(c)(1) and §201.6(c)(1)). This section includes a description of the planning process used to develop this plan, including how it was prepared, who was involved in the process, and how all of the involved agencies participated.

2.1.1 Description of the Planning Process

The Owyhee County Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan was developed through a collaborative process involving all of the organizations and agencies detailed in Section 1.0 of this document. The County's local coordinator contacted these organizations directly to invite their participation and schedule meetings of the planning committee. The planning process included 5 distinct phases which were in some cases sequential (step 1 then step 2) and in some cases intermixed (step 4 completed though out the process):

1. **Collection of Data** about the extent and periodicity of wildfires in and around Owyhee County. This included an area encompassing Ada, Canyon, Elmore, and Twin Falls to insure a robust dataset for making inferences about fires in Owyhee County specifically; this included a wildfire extent and ignition profile.
2. **Field Observations and Estimations** about wildfire risks including fuels assessments, juxtaposition of structures and infrastructure to wildland fuels, access, and potential treatments by trained wildfire specialists.
3. **Mapping** of data relevant to wildfire control and treatments, structures, resource values, infrastructure, fire prone landscapes, and related data.
4. **Facilitation of Public Involvement** from the formation of the planning committee, to a public mail survey, news releases, public meetings, public review of draft documents, and acceptance of the final plan by the signatory representatives.
5. **Analysis and Drafting of the Report** to integrate the results of the planning process, providing ample review and integration of committee and public input, followed by acceptance of the final document.

Planning efforts were led by the Project Director, Dr. William E. Schlosser, of Northwest Management, Inc. Dr. Schlosser holds 4 degrees in natural resource management (A.S. geology; B.S. forest and range management; M.S. natural resource economic & finance; Ph.D. environmental science and regional planning). Project Leader, Mr. Toby R. Brown, holds a B.S. degree in natural resource management. Together, they led a team of resource professionals that included fire mitigation specialists, wildfire control specialists, resource management professionals, and hazard mitigation experts.

They were the point-people for team members to share data and information with during the plan's development. They and the planning team met with many residents of the county during the inspections of communities, infrastructure, and hazard abatement assessments. This methodology, when coupled with the other approaches in this process, worked effectively to integrate a wide spectrum of observations and interpretations about the project.

The planning philosophy employed in this project included the open and free sharing of information with interested parties. Information from federal and state agencies was integrated

into the database of knowledge used in this project. Meetings with the committee were held throughout the planning process to facilitate a sharing of information between cooperators.

When the public meetings were held, many of the committee members were in attendance and shared their support and experiences with the planning process and their interpretations of the results.

2.2 Public Involvement

Public involvement in this plan was made a priority from the inception of the project. There were a number of ways that public involvement was sought and facilitated. In some cases this led to members of the public providing information and seeking an active role in protecting their own homes and businesses, while in other cases it led to the public becoming more aware of the process without becoming directly involved in the planning process.

2.2.1 News Releases

Under the auspices of the Owyhee County Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Planning Committee, news releases were submitted to area news papers.

2.2.1.1 Newspaper Articles

Committee and public meeting announcements were published in the local newspaper ahead of each meeting. The following is an example of one of the newspaper announcements that ran in the local newspaper.

Owyhee County Plans to Mitigate Wildfire Risk

The Owyhee County Commissioners have created a Wildfire Mitigation Plan Committee to complete a Wildfire Mitigation Plan for Owyhee County as part of the National Fire Plan authorized by Congress and the Whitehouse. The Owyhee County Wildfire Mitigation Plans will include risk analysis at the community level with predictive models for where fires are likely to ignite and where they are likely to spread rapidly once ignited. Northwest Management, Inc. has been retained by Owyhee County to provide wildfire risk assessments, mapping, field inspections, and interviews, and to collaborate with the committee to prepare the plan. The committee includes rural and wildland fire districts, land managers, elected officials, agency representatives, and others. Northwest Management, Inc. specialists are conducting analyses of fire prone landscapes and making recommendations for potential treatments. Specific activities for homes, structures, infrastructure, and resource capabilities will be proposed as part of the analysis.

One of the most important steps in gathering information about fire risk in Owyhee County is to conduct a homeowner's survey. Northwest Management, Inc., in cooperation with local fire officials, will mail a brief survey to randomly selected homeowners in the county seeking details about home construction materials, proximity to water sources, and other risk factors surrounding homes. This survey is very important to the success of the plan. Those homes that receive a survey are asked to please take the time to complete it, thereby benefiting the community overall.

The planning team will be conducting Public Meetings to discuss preliminary findings and to seek public involvement in the planning process in October. A notice on the date

and location of these meetings will be posted in local newspapers.

For more information on the Fire Mitigation Plan projects in Owyhee County contact your County Commissioner, or William Schlosser at the Northwest Management, Inc. office in Moscow, Idaho at 208-883-4488.

2.2.2 Public Mail Survey

In order to collect a broad base of perceptions about wildland fire and individual risk factors to homeowners in Owyhee County, a mail survey was conducted. Using a state and county database of landowners in Owyhee County, homeowners from the Wildland-Urban Interface surrounding each community were identified. In order to be included in the database, individuals were selected that own property and have a dwelling in Owyhee County, as well as a mailing address in Owyhee County. This database created a list of 1,874 unique names to which were affixed a random number that contributed to the probability of being selected for the public mail survey. A total of 244 residents meeting the above criteria were selected.

The public mail survey developed for this project has been used in the past by Northwest Management, Inc., during the execution of other WUI Wildfire Mitigation Plans. The survey used The Total Design Method (Dillman 1978) as a model to schedule the timing and content of letters sent to the selected recipients. Copies of each cover letter, mail survey, and communication are included in Appendix IV.

The first in the series of mailing was sent September 21, 2004, and included a cover letter, a survey, and an offer of receiving a custom GIS map of the area of their selection in Owyhee County if they would complete and return the survey. The free map incentive was tied into assisting their community and helping their interests by participating in this process. Each letter also informed residents about the planning process. A return self-addressed envelope was included in each packet. A postcard reminder was sent to the non-respondents on October 2, 2004, encouraging their response. A final mailing, with a revised cover letter pleading with them to participate, was sent to non-respondents on October 19, 2004.

Surveys were returned during the months of September, October, and November. A total of 71 residents responded to the survey out of 244. No surveys were returned as undeliverable. The effective response rate for this survey was 34%. Statistically, this response rate allows the interpretation of all of the response variables significantly at the 95% confidence level. This data will be updated until the final plan.

2.2.2.1 Survey Results

A summary of the survey's results will be presented here and then referred back to during the ensuing discussions on the need for various treatments, education, and other information.

All of the respondents to the survey have a home in Owyhee County, and 97% consider this their primary residence. About 33% of the respondents were from the Homedale area, 32% were from the Marsing area, 14% were from the Bruneau area, 6% from Murphy, 4% from Oreana, 1% from Eagle View with the remainder from other areas in the County.

Only 91% of the respondents identified that they have emergency telephone 911 services in their area. The entire county is covered with 911 service so almost 1 in 10 residents did not know they had 911 service. Their ability to correctly identify if they are covered by a rural fire district was 94%. Of the respondents, 98% correctly identified they live in an area protected by a rural or city fire district. Only 2% responded they do not have a fire district covering their home,

when in fact they do. Approximately 4% of the respondents indicated that they were inside of a fire protection district when in reality they are outside of a protection district.

Respondents were asked to indicate the type of roofing material covering the main structure of their home. Approximately 63% of respondents indicated their homes were covered with a composite material (asphalt shingles). About 21% indicated their home were covered with a metal (eg., aluminum, tin) roofing material. Roughly 16% of the respondents indicated they have a wooden roofing material such as shakes or shingles. The remaining 5% of respondents had a variety of combustible and non-combustible materials indicated.

Residents were asked to evaluate the height of vegetation within certain distances of their homes. Often, the height and type of vegetation around a home is an indicator of increased fire risk. The results are presented in Table 2.1

Table 2.1. Vegetation characteristics around homes.

Height of Vegetation	Within 75 feet of your home
None	16%
0-2 feet	36%
2-5 feet	16%
Greater than 5 feet	33%

Approximately 83% of those returning the survey indicated they have a lawn surrounding their home. Of these individual homesites, 98% indicated they keep this lawn green through the fire season. 42% of respondents indicated that they had brush within 75 feet of their homes and 59% had some kind of tree or trees within 75 feet of their home.

The average driveway length of the respondents was approximately 974 feet long (.18 mile), from their main road to their parking area. The longest reported driveway was 3 miles long. Only 39% of the driveways had turnouts allowing two vehicles to pass each other in the case of an emergency. 14% of the driveways were of native dirt, 77% were graveled or rocked and 9% paved. Respondents were asked if they had an alternative vehicle escape route from their property, 67% indicated that they did, with 37% having no alternative escape route.

Roughly 14% of the respondents in Owyhee County indicated they have someone in their household trained in wildland fire fighting. Approximately 19% indicated someone in the household had been trained in structural fire fighting. Roughly 18% had Emergency Medical Technician training and 71 % basic CPR/First Aid training. However, it is important to note that these questions did not specify a standard nor did it refer to how long ago the training was received.

A series of questions was asked regarding the availability of a variety of fire fighting resources that were around the respondents property; 97% had hand tools appropriate for fighting wildfire, 12% had a portable water tank and 9% had a stationary water tank, while 39% had a pond, lake or stream on their property. The ability to pump water was on 13% of the properties and 33% had some type of mechanical equipment that could be used to fight wildland fires.

Respondents were asked to complete a fuel hazard rating worksheet to assess their home's fire risk rating. An additional column titled "results" has been added to the table, showing the percent of respondents circling each rating (Table 2.2).

Circle the ratings in each category that best describes your home.

Table 2.2. Fuel Hazard Rating Worksheet		Rating	Results
Fuel Hazard	Small, light fuels (grasses, forbs, weeds, shrubs)	1	86%
	Medium size fuels (brush, large shrubs, small trees)	2	13%
	Heavy, large fuels (woodlands, timber, heavy brush)	3	1%
Slope Hazard	Mild slopes (0-5%)	1	83%
	Moderate slope (6-20%)	2	13%
	Steep Slopes (21-40%)	3	4%
	Extreme slopes (41% and greater)	4	0%
Structure Hazard	Noncombustible roof and noncombustible siding materials	1	23%
	Noncombustible roof and combustible siding material	3	20%
	Combustible roof and noncombustible siding material	7	17%
	Combustible roof and combustible siding materials	10	40%
Additional Factors	Rough topography that contains several steep canyons or ridges	+2	Average -2.3 pts
	Areas having history of higher than average fire occurrence	+3	
	Areas exposed to severe fire weather and strong winds	+4	
	Areas with existing fuel modifications or usable fire breaks	-3	
	Areas with local facilities (water systems, rural fire districts, dozers)	-3	

Calculating your risk

Values below are the average response value to each question.

$$\begin{array}{rcl}
 \text{Fuel hazard} & \underline{1.6} & \times \text{Slope Hazard } \underline{1.2} = \underline{2.11} \\
 \text{Structural hazard} & + & \underline{6.3} \\
 \text{Additional factors} & (+ \text{ or } -) & \underline{-2.3} \\
 \text{Total Hazard Points} & = & \underline{6.11}
 \end{array}$$

Table 2.3. Percent of respondents in each risk category as determined by the survey respondents.

00% – Extreme Risk = 26 + points
03% – High Risk = 16–25 points
35% – Moderate Risk = 6–15 points
62% – Low Risk = 6 or less points

Maximum household rating score was 17 points, as assessed by the homeowners. These numbers were compared to observations made by field crews trained in wildland fire fighting. These results indicate that for the most part, these indications are only slightly lower than the risk rating assigned by the “professionals”. Anecdotal evidence would indicate that Owyhee County landowners involved in this survey have a more realistic view of wildfire risk than the landowners in other Idaho counties where these questions have been asked.

Finally, respondents were asked “if offered in your area, would members of your household attend a free, or low cost, one-day training seminar designed to teach homeowners in the wildland–urban interface how to improve the defensible space surrounding your home and

adjacent outbuildings?” 42% of the respondents indicated a desire to participate in this type of training.

Homeowners were also asked, “How do you feel Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Mitigation projects should be funded in the areas surrounding homes, communities, and infrastructure such as power lines and major roads?” Responses are summarized in Table 2.5.

Table 2.4. Public Opinion of Wildfire Mitigation Funding Preferences.

	Mark the box that best applies to your preference		
	100% Public Funding	Cost-Share (Public & Private)	Privately Funded (Owner or Company)
Home Defensibility Projects	26%	21%	53%
Community Defensibility Projects	45%	45%	10%
Infrastructure Projects Roads, Bridges, Power Lines, Etc.	62%	21%	16%

2.2.3 Committee Meetings

The following list of people who participated in the planning committee meetings, volunteered time, or responded to elements of the Owyhee County Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan’s preparation.

- Jim Desmond Owyhee County Natural Resources Committee Director
- Andy Ogden Idaho Dept Fish and Game
- Brett Endicott Owyhee County Assessor
- Richard Freund Owyhee County Sheriffs office
- Kay Kelly Owyhee County Planning and Zoning
- Kevin Staebler Mountain Home AFB Fire Chief
- Carrie Bilbao BLM Fire Investigation
- Joe-Riley Epps BLM Fire Management Officer
- Toby R. Brown Northwest Management Inc.
- William Schlosser Northwest Management Inc.
- Brent Hunter Sho-Pai Fire Management
- Jerry Hoagland Owyhee County Natural Resource Committee
- Larry Howard County Emergency Management Coordinator
- Shirley Fuchs Owyhee County Assessors Office
- Rosey Thomas Bureau of Land Management
- Tom Benson Fire District Commissioner MRW

Committee Meetings were scheduled and held on the following dates:

September 21, 2004

Bill Schlosser began by giving the committee an introductory presentation of what was expected of each party and what materials they would need to provide in order to make a successful plan. He went over each of the major points of the final document to make sure the committee understood the scope of the project. He also provided some background information on NMI and the history of the fire mitigation program. Several preliminary maps were displayed showing some of the fire-related characteristics in the county.

After the presentation, the committee had a general discussion about some of the major issues in the county including the Silver City area, the sage grouse, juniper encroachment, current treatments, and past fires.

Bill discussed the draft document of the community assessments and asked the committee if there were any additional communities they would like included. Dynamac Corporation has already completed an assessment and mitigation plan for the Silver City area and the committee would like this document used in addition to NMI's assessments.

The committee discussed the different fire districts within the county at length including the Jordan Valley Department, which crosses the county border. A fire department has also been proposed in Silver City.

A tentative schedule was discussed. The committee would like the public meetings on November 3rd and 4th in Marsing, Grandview, and Murphy.

October 13, 2004

The committee began the meeting by reviewing the maps provided by Northwest Management, Inc. Toby handed out the draft version of the community assessments for the committee members to review and provide comments to at the next meeting or via email. Toby also went over the information needed to complete the assessments for the final document. Public meeting dates were set for November 3rd, 4th, and 5th.

The committee also discussed potential mitigation activities for the Silver City area, which is one of the county's higher risk areas. Suggestions included: water storage tanks at the town site, bigger waterlines, and a helipad.

November 29, 2004

A short committee meeting was held to go deliver the draft document and go over any changes. Members were asked to review the draft and email or fax any changes to NMI.

2.2.4 Public Meetings

Public meetings were an integral component to the planning process. It was the desire of the planning committee, and the Owyhee County Commissioners to integrate the public's input to the development of the fire mitigation plan.

Formal public meetings were scheduled on November 3 & 4, 2004, in Grandview, Marsing, and Murphy, Idaho. The purpose of the meetings was to share information on the planning process with a broadly representative cross section of Owyhee County landowners. The meetings had wall maps posted in the meeting rooms with many of the analysis results summarized specifically for the risk assessments, location of structures, fire protection, and related information. The formal portion of the presentations included a PowerPoint presentation made by Project Co-Leader, Toby R. Brown. During his presentation, comments from committee members, fire chiefs, and others were encouraged in an effort to engage the audience in a discussion.

It was made clear to all in attendance that their input was welcome and encouraged, as specific treatments had not yet been decided, nor had the risk assessment been completed. Attendees were told that they could provide oral comment during the meetings, they could provide written comments, or they could request more information in person to discuss the plan. In addition, attendees were told they would have an opportunity to review the draft plan prior to its completion to further facilitate their comments and input.

The formal presentations lasted approximately 1 hour and included many questions and comments from the audience. Following the meeting, many discussions continued with the committee members and the general public discussing specific areas, potential treatments, the risk analysis, and other topics.

Committee meetings were scheduled and held on the following dates:

November 3, 2004 – Marsing

Toby Brown of Northwest Management, Inc. made the presentation and then opened the floor for discussion. Topics discussed included:

- There are some additional areas within the county that need to be covered by a rural fire district.
- Need wildfire training to come to the firefighters during their regular training times.
- Need more wildfire education throughout the county.
- Need minimum road specifications for private roads and driveways. Also need a method of enforcement.
- There needs to be a way for the BLM to notify fire districts when fires enter their jurisdiction.
- Need to incorporate islands of non-coverage into local fire districts.

November 4, 2004 – Murphy

Toby Brown of Northwest Management, Inc. made the presentation and then opened the floor for discussion. Topics discussed included:

- Silver City would be trapped in the event of a wildfire; thus, the back road out of the area needs improvement.
- Grazing in the valley and along roads has been beneficial.
- Need to address the juniper encroachment issue.
- Need to improve communication capabilities, structures, and training for fire districts.
- Need to fill in gaps between fire districts.
- Need to upgrade to narrow band radios and alleviate communication dead spots throughout the county.
- BLM field stations to place fire crews throughout the county would improve response.
- Create new district for the Pleasant Valley and Cliffs area.
- Need to map and locate water sources including drafting sites.
- Need to rock roads in WUI due to dust problems.
- Develop a safety zone near Silver City.

November 3, 2004 – Grandview

There was no presentation in Grandview because no one attended.

2.2.4.1 Meeting Notices

Public notices of these meetings were printed in the **Idaho Press and Owyhee Avalanche** the week of October 24, 2004.



Owyhee County, Idaho Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan

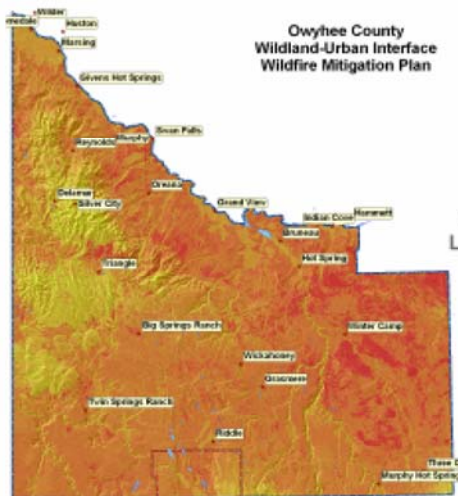


Southwest
Idaho RC&D

Public Meetings!

- **Marsing:** November 3rd, at 12:00 noon at the Marsing Community Center, 126 N. Bruneau Hwy
- **Grandview:** November 3rd, at 7:00 PM at the Eastern Owyhee County Library, 520 Boise Ave
- **Murphy:** November 4th, at 7:00 pm at the Courthouse, Highway 78

Public meetings are scheduled in Marsing, Grandview, and Murphy, November 3 & 4, to address Wildfire risks around our communities. These meetings are open to the public and will include presentations from wildfire mitigation specialists working on the Owyhee County Wildfire Mitigation Plan. Public input is being sought in order to better frame the County's efforts of fuels treatments, fire fighting resource enhancements, and public land management.



Learn about the assessments of risk (Fire Prone Landscapes - above, left) and the Wildland-Urban Interface of Owyhee County (above, right). Discuss YOUR priorities for how Owyhee County can best mitigate wildland fire risks around your community. **JOIN US!**

Each meeting will last for approximately 1.5 hours and include refreshments, a slideshow, information on the planning process, and schedules for completion.

For more information on Wildfire Mitigation Plan projects in Owyhee County, contact your County Commissioners, Bill Moore with the Southwest Idaho RC&D office at 208-888-1890 ext. 4, or Dr. William Schlosser at the Northwest Management, Inc. office in Moscow, Idaho at 208-883-4488.

2.3 Review of the WUI Wildfire Mitigation Plan

Review of sections of this document was conducted by the planning committee during the planning process as maps, summaries, and written assessments were completed. These planning committee members included fire mitigation specialists, fire fighters, planners, elected officials, and others involved in the coordination process. Preliminary findings were discussed at the public meetings, where comments were collected and facilitated.

The results of these formal and informal reviews were integrated into a DRAFT Wildland-Urban Interface Wildfire Mitigation Plan. This plan was given to members of the planning committee on November 29, 2004. The committee review process lasted from November 29 through December 31, 2004. Once changes were made, a public review version of the plan was posted at local libraries, the county courthouse, and other locations (accompanied by a press release detailing the public review process and plan availability). The public review period was open from January 15, 2005, through February 25, 2005.

Comments from the public review process were integrated into the final plan and submitted to the County Commissioners for a final review. Adoption of the plan by the county and local municipalities was completed in March 2005.